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Frank C. Abbott's charge to Montana State University class of 1965

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In the traditional presidential charge to the graduates at Montana State University's 68th commencement exercises Sunday, Dr. Frank C. Abbott, academic vice president, called attention to the problems and opportunities presented by the growing "urbanization" of higher education and spoke of the meaning to MSU of this phenomenon.

Dr. Abbott expressed the regrets of President Robert Johns and said, "As President Johns told the seniors at their assembly 10 days ago, only a deeply personal obligation to be in the East at ceremonies establishing a memorial to his father could take him from you on this occasion."

Noting that our higher education system accompanies the country generally in its rapid transformation into a rather totally urbanized condition, the speaker pointed to "a substantial and growing number of large, complex, busy, crowded, impersonal academic cities."

"What does this mean for those of us who rebel at the thought of a campus of 10,000 to 12,000 students well before another 20 years have passed?" he asked.

"Perhaps we can envision some of the great problems and opportunities in this prospect by taking note of some leading characteristics of a great city and relating them to our University."

He described the city as crowded, impersonal, exhibiting poverty's worst features and revealing the immense costs of exploitation - man's exploitation of nature, and especially, man's exploitation of man.

"But," he said, "such concepts paint only a partial view. ... The city which man has built is not all soot and smell and noise and rush and human struggle. In bringing together large numbers and varieties of people, the city presents mankind with the advantages of a division of labor, the advantages of specialization. ... Moreover, the city opens new avenues for personal development at the very moment it closes off some of those which built sound men and women out of our pioneer forebears."

(more)

"By no means is the continuing growth of the University of Montana a totally negative phenomenon," he said. "With the growth of the academic cities, including the University of Montana, some of the great qualities of our smaller, less specialized, and less hurried days will be lost. But with this same growth, new opportunities, new challenges will come."

Dr. Abbott told the graduates that the achievements of those cities that have been able to guide their growth do not happen naturally; they are man-made. He indicated that the destiny of the University can also be guided by men and women. Current and prospective urbanization need not mean impossible crowding and overspecialization.

"But we shall need to be inventive, creative in our responses to new problems and opportunities," he said. "...we shall need the understanding and support of all - on the campus, in the community, among the alumni, among the general public.

"With that understanding and support - and we count on none more than on you who have studied here - the University of Montana can build soundly for a future in which the best of the past is preserved, while we remain relevant in our rapidly changing world."

The majority of the past year's 1,000 degree candidates were in attendance as many of those who completed requirements in the preceding three quarters joined more than 600 spring-quarter candidates in commencement activities.

Faculty academic garb, accented with brilliant hues denoting degrees from universities all over the world, mingled with the sober black dress of baccalaureate candidates to present a memorable spectacle to parents and friends of the graduates. Stepping to the stately measures of the recessional march, the colorful columns filed out of the Field House, and MSU's 68th commencement passed into history, leaving a couple of "firsts" and a probable "last" on the record books.

For the first time, the exercises were conducted on a Sunday; and for the first time, the number of candidates for graduate degrees for the year reached 174, including four doctoral candidates.

Barring an unlikely future change, the class is the last to be graduated from Montana State University, Missoula. After July 1, diplomas from the Missoula institution will read University of Montana.